Saskatchewan
Education

Actualization of Core Curriculum

Recycled Paper

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Introduction

...it is timely for the partners in education to review roles and procedures relative to implementation, renewal, and improvement of Core Curriculum.

Fifteen years ago, the Minister's Advisory Committee on Curriculum and Instruction Review concluded its work with the publication of *Directions* (1984). Following consultation with parents, the public, and the educational community, the province adopted new Goals of Education (see Appendix A), and began a process of revising kindergarten to grade twelve education to enable Saskatchewan students to achieve the new goals in preparation for the twenty-first century.

Curriculum development in all areas of study was, as expected, an important part of revision to the system. In *Directions*, the curriculum development cycle was described as one that included four phases: program evaluation, program design, program implementation, and program maintenance. Maintenance was defined as "the procedures necessary to support, monitor and revitalize the existing courses of study and related materials" (p. 34).

As the program design and implementation phases of Core Curriculum development achieve major milestones (completion of the Required Areas of Study, for example), it is appropriate for the partners in education* to take stock of where we are in our understanding of how to implement, revise, and renew all aspects of Core Curriculum. Because the major emphasis over the next period of time will be on what was called "maintenance" in the original curriculum development cycle, it is timely for the partners in education to review roles and procedures relative to implementation, renewal, and improvement of Core Curriculum. The purpose of this document is twofold: to place curriculum maintenance in a contemporary context; and to present a policy framework that can guide the educational partners in their shared efforts to bring Saskatchewan's Core Curriculum to life in the classroom.

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From Maintenance to Actualization

The original curriculum development model from 1984 is in need of updating for two reasons. Firstly, the 1984 model was designed specifically for the renewal of courses of study. Our understanding of Core Curriculum has evolved over the past fifteen years, and now includes components and initiatives that are embodied in teaching and learning, and cannot be communicated to teachers and students through curriculum guides alone.

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* In this document, the term *partners in education* refers to the organizations listed on the Acknowledgements page. Representatives of these organizations comprise the Curriculum and Instruction Advisory Committee.

Secondly, the concept of an "evergreen" curriculum provides a new, contemporary model for maintaining curriculum documents – one that was not fully envisioned in 1984. Evergreen curricula (curricula that are continuously evolving) are possible now because of technological developments and the resulting ease with which information can be shared. Updates, links to new resource materials, and successful classroom experiences can be incorporated in curricula as never before.

The term actualization refers to full implementation and ongoing renewal of Core Curriculum.

When a curriculum is fully implemented in the classroom, it is brought to life within the context of a particular school and community. The term *actualization* refers to effective implementation and ongoing renewal of Core Curriculum. It is an umbrella term that takes into account activities at all levels of the education system that are aimed at making Core Curriculum a reality of everyday instruction and assessment in Saskatchewan classrooms. Actualization also includes all efforts to renew and improve curricula in order to achieve an evergreen Core Curriculum. Curriculum maintenance, as defined in the 1984 model, now falls within the larger concept of Core Curriculum actualization.

Because actualization is a shared responsibility, collaboration among school, parents, and community is essential.

Actualization can be achieved through a combination of planning and supports at the provincial level, and professional decision-making at the school and school division level. Because actualization is a shared responsibility, collaboration among school, parents, and community is essential.

Core Curriculum

Core Curriculum refers to the components and initiatives of Saskatchewan's education system that are designed to support all students in their achievement of the Goals of Education. Core Curriculum represents a model of teaching and learning in which curriculum, instruction, and assessment are integrated. The chart on the following page identifies the components and initiatives that comprise Core Curriculum, and which fall within the parameters of actualization.

It would have been difficult to imagine even ten years ago how all aspects of kindergarten to grade twelve education could be integrated in the New Core Curriculum.

It would have been difficult to imagine even ten years ago how all aspects of kindergarten to grade twelve education could be integrated in the new Core Curriculum. The endeavour to date has been successful because of co-operation and involvement at all levels, from the provincial level to the classroom. The same co-operation and involvement will contribute to the development and success of a new, expansive model of curriculum renewal – one through which all components and initiatives of Core Curriculum come to life in the classroom.

Core Curriculum Components	Core Curriculum Initiatives
Required Areas of Study Common Essential Learnings Locally-determined Options Adaptive Dimension	Instructional Approaches Student Evaluation Resource-based Learning Indian and Métis Content and Perspectives Gender Equity Multicultural Education Special Education Identity, Language, and Culture (fransaskois schools)

Figure 1: Saskatchewan's Core Curriculum

Policy Framework

The following framework, which includes a policy statement and seven principles, represents a blueprint for Core Curriculum actualization. It is intended that the partners in education work from this framework to make their own plans, according to their mandates, in order that Saskatchewan's school programs result in all students attaining the Goals of Education.

The concept of actualization referred to in the policy statement reflects...the belief that an evergreen Core Curriculum is the best means to educate Saskatchewan students for the 21st century.

The policy statement is based on the belief that Core Curriculum is multi-faceted and includes many components and initiatives (see Figure 1). The concept of actualization referred to in the policy statement reflects this broad understanding of Core Curriculum and the belief that an evergreen Core Curriculum is the best means to educate Saskatchewan students for the 21st century.

Policy Statement

The partners in the Saskatchewan Education system are committed to working together to realize the Goals of Education for all Saskatchewan learners through the actualization of Core Curriculum.

Principles

The partners agree that the following seven principles provide a guide for Core Curriculum actualization activity at all levels:

1. ***Core Curriculum actualization is a means of honouring our commitment to providing a high quality, appropriate, and relevant education for each Saskatchewan child.***

The description of an educated person articulated in *Directions* still reflects what we expect will be the needs of citizens in the 21st century. We are striving to build and maintain a learner-centred school system that emphasizes higher order thinking skills, the desire to engage in change, and the social skills to participate in a diverse society. Our goal is to provide a school system where all children develop to their full potential, regardless of ethnic or racial origin, socio-economic class, gender, or intellectual or physical capacities. We are agreed, then, that we should maintain our commitment to Core Curriculum into this next phase, with a focus on full implementation and continuous renewal.

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2. ***Actualization can only be achieved through growth at all levels of the system, from the provincial level to the community and the classroom.***

Although Core Curriculum actualization is a major concern at the organizational level, it is also true that school divisions and teachers have their concerns, as do parents and community members. Actualization activities must be inclusive, and concerted efforts must be made to encourage communication, learning, and participation by all.

When educators share their knowledge with parents and the community, they pave the way for participation and for productive partnerships to develop.

In each community, schools and community representatives should establish means for parents and community members to become knowledgeable about Core Curriculum and school programs. When educators share their knowledge with parents and the community, they pave the way for participation and for productive partnerships to develop.

For teachers and administrators, professional development opportunities provide a vehicle for gaining and sharing knowledge about provincial and school division initiatives, and successful classroom practice. While professional development can be addressed in many ways and initiated at various levels of the system, the educational partners agree that formal opportunities throughout the school year should be planned in such ways that teachers, schools, and school divisions can move forward on a variety of issues, through co-ordination between local and provincial activities.

3. ***The context of each school community should be respected in the delivery and renewal of a consistent Core Curriculum throughout the province.***

Although we all operate within a certain contemporary context, the reality of that context can vary throughout the province.

While the educational partners are in full agreement that consistency in the Core Curriculum throughout the province is one goal,it is best achieved with respect for individual differences and the realities of each school community.

Demographics shift. The effects of technology and globalization vary from community to community, as do social, cultural, and economic environments. Within local contexts, schools develop their own policies, procedures, and practices appropriate to their community. While the educational partners are in full agreement that consistency in the Core Curriculum throughout the province is one goal, it is best achieved with respect for individual differences and the realities of each school community.

4. ***The school is at the centre of curriculum actualization activity.***

Through successful implementation, a school program develops which is based on the foundational objectives of the curriculum, but which also meets the unique needs of each particular school and community.

All the educational partners recognize and respect the diversity that exists in Saskatchewan schools. Thomas Guskey (n.d.) points to the powerful impact of context on results: "The uniqueness of the individual setting will always be a critical factor in education. What works in one situation may not work in another."

As Core Curriculum components and initiatives are implemented, they become the foundation for school programs. Through successful implementation, a school program develops which is based on the foundational objectives of the curriculum, but which also meets the unique needs of each school and community. It would be counter-productive for actualization activity to occur outside of each particular school's culture and environment. With the school at the centre of actualization activity, continuous renewal of programs can occur smoothly, within the daily operations of the school.

5. ***The focus of actualization activity is on classroom practice (teaching and learning).***

Curriculum documents provide the starting point for classroom programs. What actually happens as a result of curriculum planning -- that is, classroom instruction and assessment -- is what makes a difference in students' lives. The concept of actualization of Core Curriculum should be viewed within the context of classroom activity and the student learning that results. Actualization, it must be remembered, takes into account all aspects of classroom practice that contribute to student learning.

6. ***People make the difference.***

Actualization of Core Curriculum will happen only through the participation and involvement of many different people: students, teachers, parents and caregivers, Elders, administrators, trustees, and community members. These people make the difference in the success of an implementation undertaking. All

All actualization activity should be based on the recognition that curriculum documents and initiatives become meaningful only when they become part of a school community.

actualization activity should be based on the recognition that curriculum documents and initiatives become meaningful only when they become part of a school community. While we recognize the value of strong provincial leadership, it is the people in each school community who are in the best position to plan and take responsibility for the continuous renewal of Core Curriculum in their jurisdiction.

7. ***Change is both an individual and an organizational process that requires a combination of pressure and support to be sustained.***

The task of designing and developing the new Core Curriculum was immense and constitutes nothing less than a major reform of the education system. Despite the extent of the undertaking, the goal is clear: full implementation and continuous renewal are the expectation. To achieve this, we must communicate that goal and the expectation of excellence at both organizational and individual levels.

If Core Curriculum is to be actualized in Saskatchewan schools, we will have to act on what we know: that support structures are necessary to enable teachers to fulfil their responsibilities.

The pressures of continuously improving the education system with all its components and initiatives can be challenging, especially to those delivering programs at the school level. If we have high expectations, then we must support teachers and programs with a variety of resources, both human and material. If Core Curriculum is to be actualized in Saskatchewan schools, we will have to act on what we know: that support structures are necessary to enable teachers to fulfil their responsibilities.

The Challenges

By definition, the actualization of Core Curriculum is a perpetual task. We see the following as the major challenges facing us in our conception of a plan for full implementation and ongoing renewal of Core Curriculum. The process will be an evolving one, and the answers and solutions will develop as each organization considers the implications of actualization in its respective jurisdiction.

... actualization activity applies to all aspects of Core Curriculum, many of which embody attitudes and abilities that are difficult to define and monitor.

How do we incorporate all components and initiatives of Core Curriculum in the concept of actualization?

The challenge is to ensure that actualization activity applies to all aspects of Core Curriculum, many of which embody attitudes and abilities that are difficult to define and monitor. The educational partners will need to:

- provide leadership for the groups which they represent in order to achieve widespread understanding of Core Curriculum

- provide, according to their own mandates, the appropriate resources and supports related to all Core Curriculum components and initiatives, and not just those related to curriculum guides and areas of study
- make expectations known, and exercise an appropriate level of pressure to ensure that those expectations are met.

How will we determine the direction of Core Curriculum actualization?

Because of the involvement of all the educational partners, a great many resources are at our disposal. Many of the partners are involved in educational research, particularly the universities, the STF, and the SSTA. With the participation of teachers in pilots and leadership training, we can draw on their experience in the classroom to help us ascertain "best practice", or what teachers know from classroom experience to be effective. In addition, the educational partners are involved in evaluation of new curricula and implementation methods. It is initiatives such as these, together with the latest thinking on educational change and school improvement, that will help us determine the best way to achieve full implementation and onging renewal of Core Curriculum.

The educational partners, in creating their own action plans, will need to define their roles in providing support for the actualization of Core Curriculum.

How do we make sure that adequate resources are in place to support actualization?

We hear over and over again from teachers that the biggest impediments to curriculum implementation are lack of time to study the guides and plan programs, lack of high quality learning resources to support new curricula, and insufficient supports that enable teachers to adopt new initiatives and methods. We also know from research that effective implementation of any change is dependent on the presence of adequate resources and supports. The educational partners, in creating their own action plans, will need to set priorities and define their roles in providing support for the actualization of Core Curriculum. The partners agree that actualization is an expectation. We must, then, provide the support structures, opportunities for professional growth, and financial resources that are necessary for the expectation to be met.

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How do we achieve consistency while still allowing for individual differences?

We all recognize the geographic, cultural, and socio-economic diversity of Saskatchewan. To date, Core Curriculum components and initiatives have been developed to accommodate the diversity, and still achieve consistency in content. This has been accomplished through design; for example, the foundational objectives and related learning objectives of curricula reflect the

expectations for all, while the supporting activities encourage adaptation at the school and community level. As with all aspects of Core Curriculum, the actualization plans of each respective organization must take into account the differences in students, classrooms, and communities, so that Core Curriculum can be adopted within the culture of each school.

...actualization should be supported by effective partnerships that are built on a common understanding of Core Curriculum, and this understanding should be in evidence throughout the community and not just in the school.

How do we facilitate involvement of parents and the community in order that meaningful partnerships develop for the purpose of achieving the Goals of Education?

One of the principles guiding the development of Core Curriculum is flexibility. The renewed emphasis on planning at the school and classroom level is intended to result in school programs that genuinely reflect community needs. The actualization of Core Curriculum cannot happen in a school isolated from its community. Rather, actualization should be supported by effective partnerships that are built on a common understanding of Core Curriculum, and this understanding should be in evidence throughout the community and not just in the school.

If we believe that education is a responsibility shared by all, then we must make a commitment to finding new ways of involving parents, Elders, and other community members. It will be a challenge to educators, parents, and community members alike to develop effective ways of learning and working together.

How do we co-ordinate initiatives and achieve consistency when so many organizations and jurisdictions are involved?

It will be a huge challenge to co-ordinate the efforts of so many groups and individuals, at so many levels of the education system. However, because Core Curriculum is designed to ensure a worthwhile education for every student in the province and is committed to every community, culture, and family, the involvement of so many organizations and jurisdictions must be seen as a strength rather than a barrier to change.

Next Steps

Because Core Curriculum is the foundation underlying Saskatchewan's education system, it is neither possible nor desirable to develop one clear actualization plan assigning specific roles or responsibilities to organizations and levels of the system. Many responsibilities are shared and much educational change in this province occurs as a result of initiatives at different levels.

It is expedient for each organization to support actualization through structures already in place, and in ways best suited to the organization's role, membership, and expertise.

It is intended that organizations represented on the Curriculum and Instruction Advisory Committee use this report as a basis for discussion and planning at the organizational level. The partners agree that the next steps include the following:

- examination of roles and responsibilities by each organization
- development of organizational plans reflecting commitment to the policy statement and principles in this document.

Not all organizations and educational partners will support Core Curriculum actualization in the same way, or have the same degree of responsibility for any given activity. It is expedient for each organization to support actualization through structures already in place, and in ways best suited to the organization's role, membership, and expertise.

Roles and Responsibilities

Responsibility for particular curriculum development activities shifts from the central to the local level, and from the organization to the individual, as the activity progresses and the goal is reached.

Michael Fullan (1994) describes the roles of the different levels of the education system:

> The center's role in bilateral systems is to stimulate and respond to local action, help formulate "general direction", gather and [provide] feedback [on] performance data, focus on selection, promotion and replacement, provide resources and opportunities for continuous staff development, and the like. The role of the local units is to take action, work on shared vision, develop collaborative cultures, monitor and problem solve vis-á-vis desired directions, respond and be proactive with external agencies and events, and basically to develop the habits and skills of learning organisations.

Responsibility for particular curriculum activities shifts from the central to the local level, and from the organization to the individual, as the activity progresses and the goal is reached. For example, when a new curriculum is designed, involvement at the central level is high. As the curriculum is implemented, responsibility shifts to the school, classroom, and individual teacher.

If actualization is to be continuous, each partner's activities will evolve accordingly, and full responsibility will not rest with one level (e.g., the school or classroom) in perpetuity.

However, because Core Curriculum actualization implies constant change and renewal, activity at all levels will shift back and forth from high to low, depending on the nature of the activity. For example, if changes are to be made to a curriculum that is fully implemented, involvement at the central level again becomes a factor. Depending on the activity, the degree of involvement of various partners will shift. If actualization is to be continuous, each partner's activities will evolve accordingly, and full responsibility will not rest with one level (e.g., the school or classroom) in perpetuity.

The following describes some of the roles and responsibilities that will be assumed to various degrees by Saskatchewan's educational partners in the upcoming years. In keeping with the purpose of this document, the descriptions are presented from an organizational perspective.

Leadership

It is expected that each partner in education will exercise leadership in its support for Core Curriculum with its members and throughout its jurisdiction.

Curriculum Development and Implementation

Organizations might assume responsibility with regard to curriculum implementation and renewal by:

- participating in implementation, evaluation, and revision
- facilitating the participation of members
- communicating expectations, knowledge, and/or expertise
- developing methods of networking
- providing learning opportunities
- facilitating attendance at learning opportunities
- conducting research and communicating findings.

Resource Materials

Successful implementation is dependent on the availability of appropriate learning resources, some of which will differ from community to community.

Saskatchewan's Core Curriculum is resource-based. Successful implementation is dependent on the availability of appropriate learning resources, some of which will differ from community to community. Each organization might examine its role in identifying, evaluating, developing, purchasing, and sharing resources. Because resource evaluation and acquisition are time consuming and expensive, organizations might want to examine ways of sharing information and resources. Some organizations might facilitate policy development around resources, and provide information on building collections and the role of resource centre personnel.

Instruction and Assessment

Organizations might assume responsibilities with regard to instruction and assessment by:

- conducting research and communicating results
- providing expertise
- developing ways for teachers to network and share ideas
- providing support to teachers
- providing professional development opportunities
- facilitating attendance at professional development opportunities.

Change efforts in schools cannot be completely successful without administrative support at all levels.

Administrative Support

Change efforts in schools cannot be completely successful without administrative support at all levels. Organizations might support Core Curriculum actualization by:

- providing adequate financial resources
- providing supports such as time, expertise, and learning resources
- facilitating communication at all levels
- developing policy
- facilitating policy development at the local level
- providing learning opportunities
- disseminating information.

Professional Development

Professional development is a key component of successful implementation and renewal of curriculum. Organizations might examine their role in either providing or enabling professional development at various levels. They might also examine their role in ensuring that professional development for teachers and administrators is seen as a career-long commitment.

Community Involvement

If Saskatchewan's Core Curriculum is to reflect community needs, new ways of developing effective partnerships with parents and the community must be found.

If Saskatchewan's Core Curriculum is to reflect community needs, new ways of developing effective partnerships with parents and the community must be found. Organizations might examine how they can communicate with parents and the community, and collaboratively develop new structures for effective partnerships. They might also examine their role in facilitating policy development and providing information to parents and the community.

Monitoring

Organizations might assume responsibilities in this area by:

- monitoring Core Curriculum implementation and school effectiveness
- enabling teachers to monitor their own effectiveness
- developing policy
- providing support for evaluation projects
- planning, providing, or enabling professional development
- conducting and/or participating in research
- communicating current information.

Summary

Since 1984, Saskatchewan's educational partners have been involved in defining, developing, and evaluating the Core Curriculum. This document reflects the partners' common desire to reaffirm commitment to Core Curriculum and to find ways of ensuring that it become and remain a reality throughout the province.

This document reflects the partners' common desire to reaffirm commitment to Core Curriculum and to find ways of ensuring that it become and remain a reality throughout the province.

The term *actualization* was adopted as one that embodies the belief that Core Curriculum is more than a series of curriculum guides. It takes into account activities at all levels of the education system that are aimed at bringing Core Curriculum to life within the context of each school and community. Actualization is an umbrella term that includes all efforts to renew and improve curricula in order to achieve an evergreen Core Curriculum.

One of the purposes of this document was to present a policy framework that can guide the partners in their shared efforts to actualize Saskatchewan's Core Curriculum. From the common ground of this framework -- the policy statement and principles on pages 4 to 7 -- each organization can develop an action plan honouring its commitment to Core Curriculum. Through planning at all levels of the system, Core Curriculum actualization can be achieved with respect for legislative mandate, school division mandate, professional decision-making at the school and classroom level, and student and community needs.

Appendix A: Saskatchewan's Goals of Education

Goals of education in Saskatchewan should direct efforts to develop the potential of all students in the province. Education should affirm the worth of each individual and lay the foundation for learning throughout life.

Students benefit from exposure to learning in a variety of situations. Attainment of the goals is a venture the school shares with the student, the home, the church, and the community. Although the degree of school responsibility will vary from community to community, the school has some responsibility for each goal.

A body of knowledge and a range of skills and attitudes are necessary to function in a changing world. It is intended, then, that education will enable Saskatchewan students to do the following to the best of their abilities:

Basic Skills

1. Read, write and compute
2. Acquire information and meaning through observing, listening, reading, and experiencing
3. Process information through intellectual and technological means
4. Solve problems by applying basic principles and processes of the sciences, arts, and humanities
5. Communicate ideas through written and spoken language, mathematical symbols, and aesthetic expression

Lifelong Learning

1. Seek and value learning experiences
2. Act as self-reliant learners
3. Base actions on the knowledge that it is necessary to learn throughout life

Understanding and Relating to Others

1. Act on the belief that each individual is worthwhile
2. Base actions on the recognition that people differ in their values, behaviors, and life styles
3. Interact and feel comfortable with others who are different in race, religion, status, or personal attributes
4. Develop a sense of responsibility toward others

Self Concept Development

1. Perceive themselves in a positive way
2. Appreciate their own abilities and limitations
3. Set and work toward personal goals
4. Assess praise and criticism realistically
5. Present themselves with confidence

Positive Life Style

1. Practice appropriate personal hygiene, engage in sufficient physical activity, and maintain a nutritionally balanced diet
2. Avoid harmful use of alcohol and other drugs
3. Cultivate interests that may be the basis for personal development and leisure pursuits
4. Recognize the importance of productive activity
5. Display initiative and pursue tasks diligently
6. Maintain a safe and healthful community
7. Respect and seek to enhance the environment
8. Appreciate beauty in its many natural and constructed forms
9. Express themselves creatively

Spiritual Development

1. Seek an understanding of the purpose and worth of human existence
2. Develop a knowledge of God
3. Respect family, religion, and culture in a pluralistic society

Career and Consumer Decisions

1. Develop an awareness of career opportunities
2. Develop interests and abilities in relation to vocational expectations
3. Adapt to shifts in employment patterns and technology
4. Make informed consumer decisions

Membership in Society

1. Assume responsibility for their own actions
2. Work with others to achieve individual and group goals
3. Participate in the democratic processes of government and perform the duties of citizenship
4. Respect the rights and property of others
5. Act with honesty, integrity, compassion, and fairness
6. Develop a sense of national pride and acknowledge the need for international understanding
7. Work toward greater social justice
8. Assume responsibility for dependent persons in a manner consistent with their needs
9. Respect law and authority
10. Exercise the right of dissent responsibly

Growing With Change

1. Work toward immediate and long-term goals
2. Base actions on an understanding that change is a natural process in society
3. Select workable alternatives in response to changing conditions
4. Develop confidence in making decisions that involve risk

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